



# Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2006  
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

CRM  
(202) 514-2008  
TDD (202) 514-1888

## **MICHIGAN COUPLE CHARGED WITH OBSCENITY AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY VIOLATIONS**

WASHINGTON, DC – A Brutus, Mich., couple – John Mart Messer and Deborah Messer – has been indicted on charges of operating an obscenity distribution business and related offenses, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Margaret M. Chiara of the Western District of Michigan announced today.

The indictment, returned April 20, 2006, by a federal grand jury in Grand Rapids, Mich., was unsealed and the couple was arrested in Michigan today. John Messer was charged with one count of engaging in the business of selling obscene matter, one count of mailing obscene matter, one count of transporting obscene matter via common carrier, six counts of receiving child pornography, and one count of possession of child pornography. Deborah Messer was charged with aiding and abetting the operation of a business of selling obscene matter. If convicted, the defendants face maximum penalties of five years in prison on each of the obscenity counts, 20 years in prison on the receipt of child pornography count and 10 years in prison on the possession of child pornography count.

According to the indictment, the Messers operated a business under the name JMM Products Company for the purpose of distributing and selling products, principally videotapes, including obscene material.

“The indictment and arrests reflect the Justice Department’s commitment to the vigorous enforcement of obscenity laws, which is absolutely necessary if we are going to protect citizens from unlawful exposure to obscene materials,” said Brent D. Ward, director of the Justice Department’s Obscenity Prosecution Task Force.

The task force, part of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, investigates and prosecutes the producers and distributors of hardcore pornography that meets the test for obscenity, as defined by the U.S. Supreme Court. Task force prosecutors work in coordination with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, as well as other federal and local law enforcement partners.

The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Sheila Phillips of the Obscenity Prosecution Task Force and Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Delaney, chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Michigan. The case was investigated by the FBI.

An indictment is merely an accusation and defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

###